

## Message Text

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41

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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TAGS: TGEN, SENV, MILI, VS, IT, EAID

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY ON THE CURRENT USE OF  
HERBICIDES AND ROME PLOWS BY THE GVN

REF: A) STATE 256183

B) SAIGON 15065

1. FOLLOWING IS PROPOSED RESPONSE TO SENATOR NELSON:

2. BEGIN TEXT:

DEAR SENATOR NELSON:

I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPLY TO YOUR  
COMMUNICATION OF ENCLOSING A LETTER FROM YOUR  
CONSITUEENT RAISING A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING HERBICIDES  
AND THE USE OF BULLDOZERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM.

WE NOTE THAT YOUR CONSITUEENT BASES HIS INQUIRY ON IN-  
FORMATION GIVEN TO HIM BY "AN ECOLOGIST FROM THE PROVISIONAL  
REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM"  
DURING THE RECENT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ECOLOGY IN THE  
HAGUE. SINCE THE SO-CALLED "PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERN-  
MENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM" HAS NO ADMINISTRATIVE  
GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE, NO SEAT OF GOVERNMENT, NO INSTITUTIONS  
OF HIGHER LEARNING, NO SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS, IT IS MORE LIKELY  
THAT THE SOURCE OF YOUR CONSITUEENT'S INFORMATION IS A NORTH  
VIET-NAMESE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA AGENT WHOSE PRESENCE AT THE  
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HAGUE CONFERENCE WAS NOT INTENDED TO SERVE ANY SERIOUS PURPOSE

IN THE INTEREST OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, BUT RATHER THE POLITICAL PURPOSE OF PERPETUATING TOTALLY FALSE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA CLAIMS WITH THE INTENTION OF FURTHER UNDERMINING UNITED STATES AND OTHER WESTERN SUPPORT FOR THE STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM AGAINST CONTINUED MILITARY AGGRESSION FROM THE NORTH.

WITH REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED BY YOUR CONSTITUENT, I AM PLEASED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

1) ON DEPARTURE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM VIETNAM SOME 480 BULLDOZERS INCLUDING A FEW SO-CALLED ROME PLOWS WERE TURNED OVER BY US MILITARY ENGINEERS TO REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ARMED FORCES ENGINEERS. IN ADDITION, 60 BULLDOZERS AND 2 ROME PLOWS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED TO THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT ON THE CIVIL SIDE. THE HEAVY ENGINEERING EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING BULLDOZERS AVAILABLE TO THE ARVN ENGINEERS, IS USED IN PART TO SUPPORT DEFENSIVE POSITIONS OF THE VIETNAMESE MILITARY FORCES WHOSE MISSION IT IS TO PROTECT THE POPULATION AGAINST ATTACKS FROM THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VC. ANOTHER PORTION OF THE EQUIPMENT IS BEING USED BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY ENGINEERS FOR CIVIL PURPOSES, INCLUDING THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ROADS, DIKE REPAIR, LAND RECLAMATION AND ESPECIALLY TO CLEAR JUNGLE AREAS AT REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SITES SO THAT THE PEOPLE IN THESE SITES WHO HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY COMMUNIST MILITARY ATTACKS WILL BE ABLE TO GROW CROPS FOR THEIR NEEDS. SOME 37 BULLDOZERS AVAILABLE TO THE VIETNAMESE MILITARY ENGINEERS ARE CURRENTLY BEING REPAIRED AND OVERHAULED PRIOR TO BEING TURNED OVER TO THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND LAND RECLAMATION FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING LAND CLEARANCE OPERATIONS FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES. COMPARABLE EQUIPMENT ALREADY AVAILABLE TO THE CIVIL GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR (AS NOTED ABOVE) AS WELL AS TO PRIVATE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IS, OF COURSE, BEING USED FOR NORMAL CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER CIVIL PURPOSES.

2) IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY IS ALSO USING HEAVY BULLDOZERS AND EARTH MOVING EQUIPMENT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS ALONG THE WESTERN BORDER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM WITHIN BOTH SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. THIS CONSTRUCTION IS NOT INTENDED TO CLEAR JUNGLE LAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF GROWING FOOD CROPS OR TO BUILD ROADS AND HIGHWAYS, BUT

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SERVES THE SOLE AND EXCLUSIVE PURPOSE OF FACILITATING THE MOVEMENT OF TROOPS, ARMS, AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES FROM NORTH VIETNAM TO THE SOUTH IN ORDER TO CONTINUE OFFENSIVE MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE.

3) NO HERBICIDE AIR DELIVERY CAPABILITY WAS TURNED OVER TO THE VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE BY THE UNITED STATES, AND ALL SUCH EQUIPMENT IN-COUNTRY EARLIER WAS REMOVED FROM VIETNAM PRIOR

TO THE DEPARTURE OF US FORCES. WE KNOW OF NO HERBICIDE MISSIONS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE. SOME SMALL AMOUNTS OF AGENTS BLUE AND WHITE HERBICIDES WERE LEFT BEHIND BY US FORCES ON DEPARTURE. THEIR USE HAS BEEN LIMITED TO DEFOLIATION OF BRUSH AROUND THE PERIMETERS OF DEFENSE POSTS MANNED BY VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES. HOWEVER, VIETNAMESE MILITARY AUTHORITIES ARE NOW CONSIDERING DESTRUCTION OF THE REMAINING STOCKS. AND A DECISION WAS TAKEN RECENTLY TO DEACTIVATE THE CHEMICAL UNITS ATTACHED TO CORPS AND DIVISION HEADQUARTERS OF THE VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NO AGENT ORANGE REMAINS IN VIETNAM.

4) ON THE CIVILIAN SIDE, CERTAIN HERBICIDES HAVE BEEN USED TO SUPPORT CROP PRODUCTION AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING WHEAT CONTROL, THATCH GRASS CONTROL, AND TO AID IN RICE PRODUCTION. THEIR USE HAS BEEN CONSISTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO AVOID CONTAMINATION OF THE AIR OR CREATE A POLLUTION PROBLEM. IN CALENDAR YEAR 1973 180 TONS AND THE FIRST TEN MONTHS OF 1974 76 TONS, ALMOST ENTIRELY 2,4-D AND 2,2-D, WERE IMPORTED FROM THE UNITED STATES AND FINANCED THROUGH THE COMMODITY IMPORT PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSES STATED ABOVE. I HOPE THIS INFORMATION WILL BE HELPFUL TO YOU AND THAT IT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO CLEARLY ESTABLISHING THE TRUE FACTS AND DISPELLING THE PROPAGANDA FOG WHICH HAS BEEN SO ASSIDUOUSLY DISPENSED ON THIS SUBJECT. END TEXT.  
LEHMANN

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